
Reviews of Books

Hajime Abe, *A New FAQ-Based English Grammar* [「なぜ」から始める実戦英文法]. Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 2007. 192 p. ISBN 978-4-327-45206-3, ¥1,400.

This is a grammar book written for Japanese English learners, but unlike traditional grammar books, it uses FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) as its basic approach. By posing FAQs and providing answers to these questions, the book reads easily but at the same time clearly explains many features of English grammar that Japanese learners often find difficult. Another characteristic that makes this book different from other traditional grammar books written in Japanese is its use of corpus-based information of usage frequencies and examples. These examples are valuable because they are authentic text-level materials, not made-up sentence-level examples. The chapters are divided into: nouns, pronouns, verbs, semi-verbs and tenses, modals, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions. It is a stand-alone volume and targets learners with some basic knowledge of English grammar.

The overall content of the book not only presents useful information for learners but also triggers teachers' interest both theoretically and pedagogically. For example, the categorization of the chapters on "semi-verbs and tense" and "modals" presents an interesting theoretical issue. Traditionally, most English grammar textbooks have a chapter on "verbs" and another chapter on "modals/modality" or "helping verbs." However, the author has decided to include a separate chapter and call it "semi-verbs and tenses." This seems to be an odd classification at first glance, but actually it makes a good sense from a syntactic point of view. Part 5, the chapter on "semi-verbs and tenses," deals with questions mainly related to verb tense and aspect. Therefore, what the author attempts to do here is to discuss the two features (i.e., tense and aspect) out of the so called "tense-aspect-modality," which is often categorized as one constituent (i.e., inflection or "I") of syntactic analysis. This chapter is then followed by Part 6, which is on modals. Syntactically speaking, it would be even possible to put Part 5 and Part 6 together and call it either "tense, aspect, and modality" or "inflection." However, because Japanese learners are not familiar with such categorizations, the author's decision to have two separate chapters is reasonable, yet at the same time certainly grabs the reader's attention.

Part 6 also raises another interesting pedagogical concern. This is a very short chapter, and it only contains three questions related to *would* and *could*, *used to* and *be used to*, and *should* and *ought to*. These three items are indeed difficult, and the author's explanations of these features are clear. The subtle connotations as well as different meanings and usages (e.g. deontic vs. epistemic) of various modal expressions are not only confusing to learners but also difficult for teachers to provide clear and systematic explanations. In fact, the short length of this chapter itself seems to reflect this pedagogical difficulty. Teachers often have to choose either to spend much time and explain the entire modal system or not get into the details at all. On the one hand, I would have liked to see more details regarding modals in this part of the book; on the other hand, it is completely understandable why this part only deals with what seems to be the bare minimum. This seems to reflect one of those pedagogical dilemmas and hard decisions teachers often face in the classroom.

The biggest concern I have with the book is the chapter sequence presented. Even though it seems to comply with the order of grammatical features traditionally taught in English classes, for the purpose of this book the chapter sequence here may not serve the audience's best interest. Articles (Part 1) and nouns (Part 2) are traditionally introduced and reviewed as the first two grammar items in teaching English. Even though these are early-introduced grammatical features, actual acquisition and full mastery of these features are extremely difficult for Japanese learners (e.g., Niimura & Hayashi, 1994). The fact that these features, in particular the article usage, are discussed in depth at the very beginning of the book seems to give the reader a false impression that the book is going to be more difficult to comprehend than it actually is. After reading this book, I felt that starting a book with something difficult was not the best introduction. This also raises a question whether the order of grammatical features traditionally taught is the best or not. In fact, some ESL pedagogical grammar books (e.g. Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Master, 1996) do not discuss articles/determiners until much later in the book. Obviously, this issue is beyond the scope of the book, but the order of grammatical features presented does seem to affect the reader's motivation to a degree. Article usage presented in Part 1, therefore, is an unfortunate introduction to the book.

The rest of the book explains many other grammar points in a clear and simple fashion. It is also very informative because the author explains grammatical and semantic differences of common mistakes Japanese learners make. For example, Part 2 discusses nouns and noun usage (e.g., *silence*, *the silence*, *a silence*; *poem* vs. *poetry*; *house* vs. *home*; *travel* vs. *trip*; *mind* vs. *heart*). Part 4 explains the meanings/usages of similar verbs/verbal expressions, such as *begin/start*, *arrive/reach/get to*, *have/make/get*, *see/look*, *heard/heard of*, *wound/hurt/injure*, *sit/sit down*, and *climb/climb up*. This chapter also explains the verbs like *remember* and *forget*, which take both infinitives (to Verb) and gerunds (V-ing) to indicate different meanings. Part 7 then talks about adjectival usages such as *cheap/low*, *interesting/funny/amusing/enjoyable*, *convenient/available* as well as some adjective comparison expressions such as *no more than* vs. *not more than* and *no more ~ than*. Finally, in Part 9, prepositions are discussed. The subtle yet important differences indicated by English prepositions (e.g. *about* vs. *on*, *over* vs. *above*, *day by day* vs. *day after day*, *die of* vs. *die from*, *cut my finger with a knife* vs. *cut my finger on a knife*, *crash into/crash through/crash against*) are explained clearly in this chapter. Learners of English who are interested in knowing these details will find these chapters very enlightening.

On the other hand, considering the depths of some explanation, the reader cannot help but notice the lack of explanations of the features that are more obvious and problematic. For example, in Part 4, the author discusses the verb *taste*. The question here deals with the difference between "*This tastes like cheese*" and "*I taste lots of different kinds of cheese.*" Even though the author explains the difference, I feel that the notion of transitivity vs. intransitivity should be mentioned here because this is important yet problematic for many Japanese learners. Along with the differences between the transitive verb *taste* and the intransitive verb *taste*, it would be helpful to explain some of the common mistakes such as *raise/rise*, *lay/lie* and *bring up/grow up*. Also, somewhere in Part 7, the differences between the adjectival use of present participle form of a verb (verb+ing) and the adjectival use of past participle form of a verb (verb+en) should have been included. Japanese learners often misuse expressions such as *interesting/interested*, *boring/bored*, *exhausting/exhausted*, and *tiring/tired*. For example, learners erroneously say/write, "I am boring" when they actually mean, "I am bored." Also, in either in Part 7 (Adjectives) or Part 8 (Adverbs), words such as *almost* vs. *most* should be explained because many Japanese learners use these expressions incorrectly. Also, in Part 8, the author mainly deals with the meanings of some adverbs (e.g. *always*, *already*, *also*); however, a more serious problem related to adverb usage exists, that is, their positions in a sentence. Adverbs demonstrate flexibility in their positions within a sentence (e.g. sentence-initial, pre-verb, post-verb), yet some of them (e.g. adverbs of frequency) do demonstrate a preference of position. Furthermore, the positional differences can cause subtle differences in meaning when used in discourse.

This may be quite complex and too advanced for most learners, but considering the complexity of the other chapters, I feel the discussion of these items could have been included in the chapter on adverbs as well.

However, even though I pointed out these shortages, I am also well aware that this is not a grammar reference book: it cannot encompass every problematic grammatical feature Japanese learners may face. Overall, this book does explain many features that are useful for Japanese English learners. The use of FAQs is a very good approach because the learners can easily relate to these questions, and they can trigger learners' interest and motivation. It is an insightful book for those who are interested in grammar, both for advanced learners as well as teachers who seek clear explanations on some of the details of grammar points.

References:

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Dan Yu (2006) *Yu Dan's attainment of the "Analects of Confucius"*. Beijing: China Publishing House (Zhonghua Shujv). 159 p. ISBN 978-7-101-05398-2.

In November 2006, *Yu Dan's attainment of the 'Analects of Confucius'* was first published. A year later, on November 26, 2007, China Publishing House announced that the book had 24 reprints and 4.3 million copies had been sold. Readers are going to be able to read the English version of the book next year. Why are contemporary Chinese people suddenly so interested in ancient Confucianism? Why has this book received such wide acclaim?

To the ordinary Chinese person, the *Analects of Confucius* is a profound book that is extremely difficult to understand. However, with the inspirational power of Confucianism, Professor Dan Yu has greatly reduced the distance between the Mahatma of Chinese culture and ordinary Chinese people with her simple and succinct language and touched a sympathetic chord of Confucian thought in the average Chinese mind. Readers feel much closer to the classic teachings simply because the original intention of the "Analects of Confucius" details how to live a joyful and authentic life. Confucius never expected that his talks with students would become the origin of Confucianism, and consequently the topic of academic research for thousands of years. However, the value of the Classics can be reached through different experiences and through different individuals, which supports the "Dao Bu Yuan Ren" meaning, the "truth is not far away from people".

Fundamentally the *Analects of Confucius* is a book on the philosophy of life and society. In her book, professor Yu elaborates the essence of the Confucianism from seven aspects; these are: *Tian*, *Di* and *Ren* (sky, earth and mankind); *Xin Ling* (mind); *Chu Shi* (dealing with things); *Jun Zi* (gentleman); *Jiao You* (making friends); *Li Xiang* (ideals); and *Ren Sheng* (life). The book starts with human beings' position in nature and their relation to nature in Chapter 1. *Tian* (sky) and *Di* (earth) are philosophical terms for nature or natural laws. As Confucius once told his students, *Tian* does not talk, but guides the four seasons and all creatures. *Di* is the homeland of all creatures. Mankind's relation to *Tian* and *Di* is characterized by periods of awe, obedience and tacit understanding. Mankind becomes very powerful when the essence of *Tian* and *Di* is condensed in the mind. The harmony among *Tian*, *Di* and *Man* makes this unity an integrated

whole. While *Tian*, *Di* and *Man* are called *San Cai* (three intelligences) they cannot be separated. In interpreting this trinity, Yu makes the analogy of *Tian* as idealism, and *Di* realism. *Tian* and *Di*, or idealism and realism, form the personality ideal of human beings. A person with ideals (*Tian*) but without *Di* is only a daydreamer, and a person with *Di* but without ideals is only a practitioner.

"Happiness" is an important concept of Confucianism. Confucius frequently discussed issues of happiness such as how to be happy and how to make other people happy with his students. To many, happiness is closely related to wealth. However, according to Confucius, happiness comes from one's innermost feelings. If a person keeps himself happy when he is very poor, or a person is very humble even when he is rich, his happiness is from his heart. How does one make other people happy? According to Confucius, there are three key things we can do to make other people happy: *Ji Suo Bu Yu*, *Wu Shi Yu Ren* (What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others); showing loyalty and forgiveness; and giving love and understanding to other people. When a person finds his position between *Tian* and *Di*, he will be aware of doing the three things mentioned above and keep himself happy while keeping other people happy. According to Confucius, true happiness is the happiness from one's heart. A person's true happiness comes from his everyday practice of moral principles with a powerful mind, and appropriate ways of dealing with things and other people. It takes an entire lifetime to reach that boundary. The book guides readers step by step over several chapters with one aspect of daily life in each chapter. The way the book explains the daily practices on the journey to Confucius' ideal is very simple and easy to follow.

Since true happiness is from one's heart and mind, the premise of true happiness is a powerful mind. What is a powerful mind? The words Professor Yu uses most to explain the meaning of a powerful mind are peace, ease, and appropriate attitude. If one can deal with frustration and disappointment with an attitude of peace and ease, one can be very close to true happiness. What a person sees is what a person has in his mind or heart. If a person has all the principles and rules in his mind, it will greatly reduce chances of him or her doing the wrong things. Confucius believed that a powerful mind comes from thinking, listening and observation, but he warned his students to be cautious in their words and actions to avoid anxiety and regret.

While talking about how to make other people happy, Confucius does not have a religious view of returning hate with love although he is strongly against returning hate with hate. In answering his students' questions on this subject, Confucius says that one should return love with love, but also return hate with justice. Yu interprets that this is because Confucius advocates the efficiency of life and the pride of mankind, and that returning hate with love is a waste of life. To make other people happy does not mean that one has to be very close to others or try to change other people. One should stop trying to convince someone who is doing the wrong thing if the person does not listen. Keeping one's distance and letting others be independent are ways of respecting their personality. If one cannot follow these rules while dealing with others, one does not have true happiness and, therefore, cannot make other people happy. To make other people happy does not mean to make everybody happy however. Confucius advised his students to make three types of friends: those who are just, those who are honest, and those who are knowledgeable. Confucius also warned his students to stay away from those who are flattering, double-faced, or exaggeratory. While making those who deserve happiness happy, one makes oneself happy. But one should never waste his or her time on trying to make those who will never be satisfied happy.

In Confucius' book of over 20,000 characters, the word *Jun Zi* (gentleman) appears more than 100 times. *Jun Zi* is a term that is used to describe a moral person, and defines Confucius' standard for an ideal social being. Yu's book has a chapter on the term of *Jun Zi*. First of all, *Jun Zi* has no worries, anxieties or fears simply because he is kindhearted, understanding, and courageous. The strength of *Jun Zi* comes from the selective power of his mind. He knows where to go, where to stop, and where he belongs. In other words, he finds an appropriate position in society for himself, so he never complains about, for example,

not being given opportunities or being misunderstood by other people. Second, *Jun Zi* studies hard in order not to show off in front of other people or to please others, but instead to improve himself. To *Jun Zi*, the goal of learning is *Xiu Shen*, which means improving yourself through practice of the moral principles. According to Confucianism, *Xiu Shen* is the first step to a peaceful world. When every individual has a peaceful mind, every family will be harmonious (*Qi Jia*) and we will have a well-ordered society (*Zhi Guo*) and a harmony in international affairs (*Ping Tian Xia*). *Xiu Shen*, *Qi Jia*, *Zhi Guo* and *Ping Tian Xia* (meaning peaceful individual, family, society and the world) are the ultimate ideals of Confucianism, and all start from practicing the behaviors of *Jun Zi*. Third, Confucius often talks about *Jun Zi*'s moral practices in comparison with *Xiao Ren* (villain/mean person). The following are the different qualities between *Jun Zi* and *Xiao Ren*:

<i>Jun Zi</i>	<i>Xiao Ren</i>
<i>Yi</i> : does things through right ways	<i>Li</i> : is only concerned with personal gain
<i>De</i> : moral principles	<i>Tu</i> : own family's interest
<i>Xing</i> : laws and rules	<i>Hui</i> : takes advantages
<i>Jin</i> : acts with constraint	<i>Zheng</i> : fights
<i>Qun</i> : gets along with others	<i>Dang</i> : forms cliques
<i>He Er Bu Tong</i> : friendly but not at the expense of principles	<i>Tong Er Bu He</i> : agrees outwardly but does not really cooperate
<i>Zhou Er Bu Bi</i> : cares about many people but leaves space for friends	<i>Bi Er Bu Zhou</i> : forms a small group but is unfriendly to others
<i>Yi Shi Er Nan Yue</i> : easy to get along but difficult to be flattered	<i>Nan Shi Er Yi Yue</i> : difficult to get along but easy to be flattered
<i>Xing Guo Qi Yan</i> : action over words	<i>Yan Guo Qi Xing</i> : words over action

Professor Yu lists Confucius' major comparisons between *Jun Zi* and *Xiao Ren*, and concludes that a *Jun Zi* is a person who is kind, noble, pleasant, and down-to-earth.

In addition to the types of friends a person should make, Confucius also discusses when a person needs friends. In the *Analects*, he divides a human's life into stages in two ways: one is general; the other is more specific. First, Confucius divides human life into three stages: youth, middle age, and old age. There is one barrier at each stage. Young people should be abstinent; middle-agers should stop fighting for position or other things, and old people should not be greedy. Good friends will remind you to stay peaceful and help you to get over the three barriers smoothly. Second, Confucius lists six developmental stages of man's mind. In the last chapter of the book, Yu elaborates on the famous six life coordinates of Confucius: at the ages of fifteen, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, and seventy. Confucius thinks that fifteen is the right age to study since he started learning ancient classics when he was fifteen years old. He also advocates that learning from books be accompanied by independent thinking and application of knowledge. The symbol of stage thirty is an independent and confident mind. One should be able to find a position in the society he belongs to (*Li*). Forty is the age of psychological maturity "Bu Huo" (no wonders). At the age of forty, one should be able to discard things no longer needed, and know how to discard. One can also initiatively ponder and behave according to the doctrine of the Mean (*Zhong Yong*: avoiding extremes). A man knows his destiny at the age of fifty (*Zhi Tian Ming*). He has a stable mind and does not complain to other people or about the world in general. External things will not distract him any more. The symbol of a sixty-year-old person is *Er Shun*, meaning being pleased to hear. His powerful mind can listen to any words from anybody because he understands where the words come from and why. "Er Shun", in Yu's interpretation, means bemoaning the state of the universe, and thus can understand and empathize with other people in

their standpoint. When a man reaches seventy, he has a free mind and a free will. He can do things according to his desire that will never be wrong because all the natural laws and social rules are fused in his heart.

In her book, Yu introduces Confucianism as a practical philosophy of life that is useful and beneficial to the common people. The two eternal topics of Confucianism are people and the present world. Confucius never talks about ghosts and gods. Responding to the students' question, he said: "I still do not understand the people alive, how would I understand those dead", and "I still do not know the truth of life, how would I know the truth of death?" So the whole book of the *Analects of Confucius* is about people's life in the present world. Through discussing man's position in nature and society, man's words and behavior, ways of dealing with things and people, and the stages of man's life, Confucius tries to lead us to live a peaceful and down-to-earth life. Where does one start?

Confucius is the spiritual ancestor of the Chinese. Confucianism is at the origin of Chinese culture. Yu's book has touched the practical meaning of Confucianism with simple explanations and many examples and short stories that are easy to understand. It has been generally welcomed among ordinary Chinese but has also received some criticism from readers. The very first Prime Minister of the Song Dynasty (960-1126) said that he ruled the whole country with half of the *Analects of Confucius*. Professor Yu would rather use half of the *Analects* to guide her daily life. Can half of the *Analects* guide more people and harmonize the whole world? Confucianism has touched the true meaning of what an enjoyable human life is; it may surmount space and time to be enjoyed by a new global community of different ages and ethnicities. The premise of this is that everyone involved stays away from any political and religious propaganda and rigid theorizing, and goes back to his or her natural heart and peaceful mind.

There are 210 Institutes of Confucian study established in 64 countries now and more than 200 organizations from 61 countries are currently applying for grants to establish Institutes in their areas too. You may not have the chance to go to one of the Institutes, yet reading Professor Yu's book will help you to understand the fundamentals of Confucianism.

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